

THE PAUPER OF PARK LANE

By WILLIAM Le QUEUX.

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CHAPTER IV.

Which is Distinctly Mysterious.

Max Barclay, on leaving Dr. Petrovitch, had taken a cab straight to Charles's chambers in Jermyn street, arriving there shortly before 6. Green, his man, had told him, however, that his master had returned soon after luncheon, ordered two big bags to be packed, and had left with them upon a hansom, merely saying that he should be absent a week, or perhaps two, and that no letters need be forwarded.

Max was not surprised at this sudden departure, for old Statham had a habit of sending his confidential secretary hither and thither at almost a moment's notice. The old fellow's financial interests were enormous and widely dispersed. Some of them were in Serbia and Bulgaria, where he held concessions of great value.

He had had a finger in most of the financial undertakings in the near East during the past fifteen years or so. Out of the Oriental Railway extension from Salonica to the Serbian frontier alone he had, it was said, made a huge fortune, for he was the original concessionaire. For some years he had lived in the Balkans, looking after his interests in person, but nowadays he entrusted it all to his agents, with occasional visits by his confidential secretary.

Therefore, Max suspected that Charles had left for the East, more especially that at the hour he had left Jermyn street he could have caught the afternoon continental service from Charing Cross via Boulogne.

So he went on to his own rooms, changed, dined at the Automobile Club, his mind full of what the doctor had told him concerning Charles and Maud. He had, of course, suspected it all along. Marlon knew the truth, but loyal to her brother, she had said no word. Yet when he had seen Rolfe with the ex-steward's pretty daughter, he had long ago guessed that the pair were more than mere friends.

That the doctor disapproved of the affair was somewhat disconcerting, more especially as he had openly declared that he had other ideas of Maud's future. What were they? Was her father hoping that she would marry some young Serbian—a man of his own race?

His seat in the doctor's cigar lit nearly 3 o'clock, wondering how he could assist the man who was not only his dearest friend, but brother of the girl to whom he was so entirely devoted, and who he intended to marry.

He sighed with regret when he thought of her undergoing that shop drudgery to which she had never been accustomed. The early rising, the eternal drive of business, the hours devoted to the care of those petting, snapping women customers, and those hasty scrambles for meals. He had seen her engaged in her business, and he had met her after shop hours, pale, worn, and fagged.

And yet he—the man who was to be her husband—lived in that ease and idleness which an income of twelve thousand a year secured.

Had Petrovitch not told him that Marlon was dining at Cromwell road and going to a concert with Maud afterward, he would have wired to her to meet him. But he knew how devoted the two girls were to each other, notwithstanding the difference of their stations, and how Maud welcomed Marlon's company at concerts or theaters, to which her father so seldom cared to go.

Suddenly it occurred to him that if he returned to the doctor's he would meet Marlon there later on, when she came back from Queen's Hall, and be able to drive her home to that dull street at the back of Oxford street, where the assistants of Cunningham's, Limited, "lived in."

This reflection aroused him, and, glancing at the smoking-room clock, he saw it wanted a quarter of eight.

Presently, when he had somewhat recovered from his surprise, he ascended the stairs, his footsteps now echoing strangely through the empty place, and there found that the drawing-room, and in fact all the other rooms, had been completely and quickly cleared. The carpets had in some cases been left, but in the hasty removal curtains had been torn down from the rings, leaving corners and poles, and the grand piano remained, it being apparently too large and heavy for rapid transit.

He ascended even to the servants' rooms on the top floor, but found scarcely a vestige of furniture left.

In one back room, a small half-garret with a slightly sloping roof, he noticed a cupboard, which curiously led him to open, as he had opened other cupboards. As he did so, he saw a bundle upon the floor, as though it had been hastily thrown there.

As he pulled it forth it unrolled, and he then saw that it was a woman's light gray tweed skirt and coat.

The latter fell damp to his touch, and as he held it up to examine it he saw that the breast and sleeve were both saturated with blood!

It dropped from his nerveless fingers. Some secret crime had been committed in that house, so suddenly and mysteriously divested of its furniture.

Max Barclay, pale as death, stood gazing around him, staggered, bewildered, horrified, scarce daring to breathe.

Why had Charles Rolfe fled so hurriedly and secretly from the place?

What, indeed, had been his business there at all?

Should he rap at the door? Or would that further alarm the intruders? He had knocked many times at the front door, it was true, but they would no doubt wait until they believed he had gone. Or else they might escape by the rear of the premises.

What should he do?

He hesitated again, with bated breath. Next instant, however, he heard upon the stone steps above him, leading from the pavement to the front door, the light tread of feet quickly descending. Some one, having watched him descend there, was leaving the house! And yet so noiselessly that at first Max believed himself mistaken.

In a second he had dashed up the area steps and stood upon the pavement. But already he realized the truth. The front door stood ajar, and the intruder was flying as fast as his feet could carry him in the direction of Brompton road.

The foreigner in London, he remembered, often engages servants without sufficient inquiry into their past.

For a few moments he stood motionless, his ears strained at the door.

The movement was repeated. Some one seemed to be leaving the dining-room, or he distinctly heard the light footfall.

Therefore, with scarce a sound, he crept down the steps to the pavement and descended the winding flight to the area door. With great caution he turned the handle, but, alas! the knob went right round in his hand, the door remaining still fastened.

A light showed in the kitchen, but whether any one was there he of course could not tell. Again he tried the door, without avail. It was securely fastened, while, as far as he could ascertain, there were no marks of any forcible entry.

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In a second he had dashed up the area steps and stood upon the pavement. But already he realized the truth. The front door stood ajar, and the intruder was flying as fast as his feet could carry him in the direction of Brompton road.

Swiftly, without looking back, the man sped lightly along the pavement to the next corner, which he turned and was a moment later lost to view.

Max Barclay did not follow. He stood there like a man in a dream.

"What," heaven's name, is the meaning of this?" he held powerless, he stood in the direction the fugitive had taken.

His first impulse had been to follow, but next moment, as the escaping intruder had passed beneath a street lamp, he recognized the figure unmistakably, both by the clothes and hat, as none other than his friend Charles Rolfe!

He fell back, staggered by the discovery.

For quite a brief space he stood, unable to move. Then, seeing the door ajar, he ascended the steps and entered the house. The lights were switched on everywhere, but, on going in, something—what it was he could never describe—crossed the threshold that he became instinctively aware that some mystery was there.

In a few seconds the amazing truth became apparent, for when he entered the dining-room, to the left of the hall, he started, and an involuntary exclamation of surprise escaped him. The place was empty, devoid of every stick of furniture!

From room to room he dashed, only to find that everything had been mysteriously removed. In the brief hours of his absence Dr. Petrovitch had apparently fled, talking with him all his household effects.

He stood in the hall utterly dumfounded.

Why had Rolfe been there? What had he been doing in the empty house? The swift manner in which the removal had been effected increased the mystery, for he had not left the doctor till 6 o'clock. Besides, he had no doubt dined with his daughter Maud and with Marlon, and they would not leave until about 8 o'clock.

Again, a removal of that magnitude, requiring at least two vans, after dark could not possibly be effected without attracting the notice of the constable on duty!

Perhaps the police really did know who carried out the sudden change of residence. Anyhow, the whole affair was a complete enigma which amazed and stupefied him.

Presently, when he had somewhat recovered from his surprise, he ascended the stairs, his footsteps now echoing strangely through the empty place, and there found that the drawing-room, and in fact all the other rooms, had been completely and quickly cleared.

The carpets had in some cases been left, but in the hasty removal curtains had been torn down from the rings, leaving corners and poles, and the grand piano remained, it being apparently too large and heavy for rapid transit.

He ascended even to the servants' rooms on the top floor, but found scarcely a vestige of furniture left.

In one back room, a small half-garret with a slightly sloping roof, he noticed a cupboard, which curiously led him to open, as he had opened other cupboards. As he did so, he saw a bundle upon the floor, as though it had been hastily thrown there.

As he pulled it forth it unrolled, and he then saw that it was a woman's light gray tweed skirt and coat.

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MAY CLOSE CONDUIT

Georgetown Citizens Vote On Rock Creek Question.

PRESIDENT WANTS TO RESIGN

Association Representing Sentiment of Community Decides in Favor of "Cover" for Creek, Calling "Open-treatment" Idea a Menace to Health—Engineer Gives Lecture.

Action was taken by the Georgetown Citizens' Association last night in a meeting in Red Men's Hall, Thirty-second and N streets, favoring the "closed treatment" of Rock Creek improvements.

After much discussion, the association voted in favor of the adoption of the report of the committee on public improvements, which provides that the waters of Rock Creek be conveyed by means of a covered conduit in as direct line as possible from a point in the creek bank near Lyon's mill to the south line of L street, in Georgetown.

Open treatment has been under consideration for some time in the plans for the improvement of Rock Creek. The report of the public improvements committee of the Georgetown Citizens' Association reads:

"Notwithstanding the belated report of the present District Commissioners leans toward the open treatment, this committee is unanimous in coming to the conclusion that such treatment is out of the question for a public stream, as the creek is at present from its drainage of Zoo Park; and the sewers emptying into it at O and P streets, as well as beyond the corporate limits, renders such treatment a menace to public health, and even more nauseating than are the present dumps."

The report was prepared and read by John Hadley Doyle.

Engineer Gives Lecture.

Until last night the Georgetown Citizens' Association, which practically represents the entire sentiment of Georgetown, has been undecided as to what course to pursue on the question of treatment of Rock Creek.

Last night the minds of the members of the association on the subject were cleared by a lecture given by Walter J. Douglass, engineer in charge of plans for the improvements proposed along Rock Creek, illustrated with stereopticon views. Estimates were made by Mr. Douglass, as follows: Open treatment, \$1,500,000; semi-covered treatment, \$3,000,000; full conduit, No. 1, \$5,000,000; full conduit, No. 2, \$7,250,000; all treatments, from L street to Potomac Park, \$1,040,000. The War Department estimate for 1908, amounting to \$17,325,000, was not deemed as practical as the others.

Having in view the fact that the report of the committee on public improvements had been accepted by the association, and seeing that its contents bound him to a directly opposite position to that which he had held in the past, President George A. King asked that his resignation be accepted, as he could not conscientiously present the wishes of the association before the Commissioners.

Find Way Out.

This difficulty was overcome by Albin K. Parris, who moved that the committee on public improvements accept this duty and thus prevent the president of the association from resigning. Henry S. Mearns, first vice president of the association, in whose favor President King resigned, refused to take the offer proffered to him under those conditions, and the association voted to retain Mr. King as president.

On "Art of Expression."

Mrs. M. Landon Reed, of New York, spoke on "the art of expression" at the First Presbyterian Church, John Marshall place, last night.

Mrs. Reed will deliver a course of public lectures at the Shoreham, beginning next Friday at 4:45 o'clock in the afternoon, when she will talk in "Power through poise." On Friday, March 13, at 4:45 o'clock, Mrs. Reed will talk on "Walking: A lost art." Friday, March 20, she will talk on "The breath of life."

Englishman Wants Papers.

New York, March 2.—Among those who applied to-day for citizenship papers to Clerk Donovan, of the United States Naturalization Bureau, was Capt. George E. Luck-Howard, an Englishman who has spent seven of his thirty years chasing pirates, smugglers, and other careless gentry in the Philippines.

Art Properties of Late Actor Bring \$3,307 First Day.

New York, March 2.—The first afternoon sale of the art property collected by Richard Mansfield netted \$3,307.

There were 210 lots in this section of the sale, the first 218 numbers consisting largely of china, glass, silver, and bric-a-brac. There were included also a number of fine engravings by Thomas Cook after the original engravings by William Hogarth, engravings and photographs of theatrical interest, some artist's proofs and a few old Chinese paintings.

MANSFIELD SALE OPENS.

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Open 8 a. m. Close 9 p. m. Saturdays, 9 p. m.

SKANN'SONS' & C

8th St. & PA. AVE.
"THE BUSY CORNER"

Spring millinery opening

300 French and American hats

What's to be new this spring in hats? Come and see. You'll be amazed and delighted with the new ideas portrayed. Crowns are much higher. Extremes are the order of the day—either small turbans or large picture hats have been ordained by fashion.

Soft, feathery effects are most pronounced, although flowers will be much used to adorn the new hats.

A new feature is hats made of rough rajah and other Oriental silks, and these, together with rough braids, seem to be most popular.

Maline and dotted nets are much used in trimming, and the soft effect thus produced is found becoming to many women.

New colorings are coral, jacques, mauve, taupe, the new Copenhagen, cactus, and "mi-traille," together with the staples.

Pattern hats range in price—\$35 up to \$65.

Wonderful variety of hats at \$5 and \$10.

Second Floor—Millinery Salon.

MEN AND THINGS.

John Sharp Williams, the leader of the Democratic minority on the floor of the Senate, and also Senator-elect from Mississippi, enjoys a good story and knows how to tell one. He generally keeps a number on tap ready for any emergency.

"Several years ago," he said the other day, after settling himself in a large, comfortable leather-covered chair in the Democratic cloak room, and addressing a number of colleagues, "I was dining at a celebrated restaurant in New Orleans and overheard a conversation between a party of Frenchmen at an adjoining table that was quite interesting, to say the least.

"They were discussing, it seems, 'affaires militaires,' and the part men of French extraction had played therein in making the history of the world. 'Yes, there is no doubt,' said one of the group eloquently, 'but that the French people excel the men of all other nationalities in affairs military.' Then he enumerated quite a formidable list of distinguished French military men.

"I believe," spoke up another member of the party, after taking a sip of absinthe, 'that the Americans have produced a number of very creditable military men. I understand that there was a man in the Confederate army by the name of—ah, yes—Robert E. Lee, who stood very high as a military commander.'

"Yes," replied the first speaker, 'I often heard Gen. Beauregard speak very favorably of him.'"

Mr. Williams will not take his seat in the Senate until March 4, 1911. He expects to be re-elected to the House of Representatives next year, and if there should be a political revolution and the Democrats succeed in gaining control of the House in the Sixty-third Congress, Mr. Williams might have the unique distinction of being Speaker of the House while holding a certificate of election to the Senate.

A friend pointed out the possible contingency before him, and said: "John Sharp, you are in danger of becoming a regular Pooh-Bah. Remember, if you know, you will have yourself nominated for President; just to occupy your spare time."

"No," said Mr. Williams, looking very serious. "I must draw the line at the White House. My wife went there one day, and made a careful inspection of the premises. She reported it to be too damp and no place to raise young children, and told me never to permit myself to be nominated for the presidency. You see, I have my orders! Every married man will understand how utterly impossible it would be for me, under the circumstances, to accept a Presidential nomination from either of these great parties."

The Right Rev. Henry C. Potter, bishop of New York, is the soul of chivalry and particularly fond of a joke. Not long since Bishop Potter was journeying from Philadelphia to New York, and he found the smoking car full to overflowing. As there is nothing the good bishop so thoroughly enjoys as puffing the fragrant weed, the thought of the ride without a lonely man's solace was more than he could endure. So he took refuge in the rear seat of the adjoining car near an open door, and proceeded to smoke behind an ostentatiously spread newspaper.

All was serene for a time, but presently in came a severe-looking woman of middle life, with a large, aggressive brow and a bundle of papers. She took the seat in front of the eminent churchman. She sniffed and glared around, but the bishop merely expressed his surprise and apparently oblivious of the sensation he was creating. Next she cleared her throat and signaled, and finally she asked in a loud tone of voice if any one had seen the conductor. That functionary was not forthcoming, and the bishop kept on reading his paper and incidentally puffing away at his cigar.

At last the woman bounced up, and going in his seat, tamped the offending smoker on the shoulder. "You see," she said, "I have my orders! Every married man will understand how utterly impossible it would be for me, under the circumstances, to accept a Presidential nomination from either of these great parties."

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